

## Education Committee Testimony

1 March 2023

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I appear before you today on behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Directors of Connecticut ASCD, a professional association of educators – from pre-service to late-career, including paraprofessionals, classroom teachers, special educators, counselors, speech/language pathologists, school psychologists, social workers, building- and district-level administrators, and university professors.

I also have the honor of co-chairing, with Dr. Alicia Roy – the president of Connecticut ASCD, the *Task Force to Study the Comprehensive Needs of Children in the State*, which the General Assembly empaneled two years ago (Public Act 21-46), and which it reauthorized last year (Public Act 22-81). [A copy of our [most recent report](#) is available on the webpage of the **Committee on Children.**]

The *Task Force* has made 30 substantive recommendations, all focused – per the General Assembly’s charge to us – on the tenets of the Whole Child framework, which makes plain that, if children are to be engaged – and to be receptive to support and challenge – at school, they must first be healthy and safe, both physically and emotionally; and, by extension, that their families must enjoy access to healthcare, food security, economic security, appropriate social supports, and affordable housing in safe neighborhoods.

My colleagues at Connecticut ASCD and I support HB 6763, because it is entirely consonant with the Whole Child framework. Moreover, it echoes one of the *Task Force*’s recommendations [**Recommendation E.4**], which asserted the need to “Significantly reduce the number of mandates for schools – especially those serving students with the greatest need, who therefore most require genuinely engaging, culturally responsive instructional practices,” and which acknowledged, “While accountability is inarguably necessary, many of the current mechanisms for ensuring it have served to narrow the curriculum, stifle innovation, and render school less engaging for students and educators.”

For more than two decades, the federal government and states like Connecticut, have fixated on test scores, while ignoring the actual societal causes for the consistently low scores that we have seen from schools and districts serving our students with the greatest need. Year upon year, we have increased sanctions on those schools and districts, and on the educators who serve in them, all in the name of equity. Despite that, as a [Working Paper from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University](#) has convincingly shown, “the gap in achievement between children from high- and low-SES backgrounds has not changed” across the four decades for which the paper’s authors have “sufficiently rich SES data” (p. 16). Those scholars assert, “If the goal is to reduce dependence of students’ achievement on the socioeconomic status of their families, re-evaluating the design and focus of existing policy programs seems appropriate” (Hanushek et al., 2020, p. 28).

The audit for which HB 6763 calls is necessary and appropriate, if not sufficient. Another more immediate step for the General Assembly to take is to fully fund, *now* – not in 2028, the Education Cost Sharing formula passed in October 2017. This was yet another recommendation of the *Task Force* [**Recommendation E.1.**].

Thank you very much for your time.